


*Disappearing Landmarks
of
Woodbridge*

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*Disappearing Landmarks
of
Woodbridge*

By Amy E. Breckenridge

*This little book is lovingly dedicated to her memory by The
Breckenridge Auxiliary of the First Presbyterian Church of Wood-
bridge, New Jersey.*

1946



Amy E. Breckenridge

DISAPPEARING LANDMARKS OF WOODBRIDGE.

The land which comprises Woodbridge Township was first purchased from the Indians by three men in 1664, and then made over to Governor Carteret and John Ogden. In 1666 the two sold it to Daniel Pierce and others for £80. The first settlers came to Woodbridge in the latter part of the summer of 1665. They were descendants of the Puritans. Later came emigrants from England, Scotland and Ireland, and later still the Huguenots, who fled from their homes because of persecution. They were sturdy, intelligent, God-fearing people, whose influence was felt years later in this community.

Someone has said: "This is a reminiscent age; much is being written, the result of research and a desire to preserve the facts of the past and rescue from oblivion the lives and times of our ancestors." Perhaps it is a fad, but I think a commendable one, for we should not forget the men and women who suffered hardships and planned so well to give us a community which has continued for so many years. Woodbridge was among the early settlements in this country. It originally included Carteret, Rahway and as far as Metuchen and Bonhamtown.

Scattered over this large area we find, still standing, some landmarks of colonial times.

During the Revolution, New Jersey was one of the battlegrounds of the country, and no part of the colonies experienced more deeply the bitterness of the hatred between Tory and Continental.

Woodbridge, situated between New York and Philadelphia, with the old post road going through the town, was the scene of much fighting by the British, Tories and Continentals during the war. Soldiers were continually passing through this settlement, coming by boat and landing at the old Blazing Star Landing, in Carteret, as well as in the vicinity of Sewaren.

Of all the districts that suffered most from the forage and provision raids inspired by the Tories, the settlement from Staten Island Sound to New Brunswick felt and showed evidence of their pathway.

The appearance of the town was given by a Swedish botanist who traveled through this section in 1748. "Woodbridge was a small town in a plain, consisting of a few houses. The houses were most of them built of boards; the walls had a covering of shingles on the outside. These shingles were round on one end and all of a length in a row. Some of the houses had an Italian roof, but the greater part had a roof with pediments. Most of them were covered with shingles. In most places we met with wells and buckets to draw up the water."

The foregoing sketch will give us a mental picture of the town two hundred years ago, and we will endeavor to locate the residences as best we can of some of our forefathers.

The town seemed to center around the kirk green. This took in the property where the Presbyterian Church, cemetery and triangle are located, and extended to the northern boundary of the property of Trinity Church.

The first church is described as being a queer looking meeting house, built

in 1675, approximately where the present building now stands. This was first known as the town church, and became a Presbyterian Church in 1707. The original building was replaced by the present one in 1803. The burial ground had burials prior to 1700.

Trinity Episcopal Church was founded in 1711. Its burying ground dates from 1714. The present edifice is the third, and was built in 1860.

On the site of the Methodist parsonage stood the Quaker Meeting House with a burying ground in the rear, which dates from 1707.

The house on Main Street, next to Christensen's Department Store, was the original Methodist parsonage. The records tell us that in 1680, Rev. John Allen of England was selected as pastor of the town church, built in 1675 on the kirk green. The town made him a freeholder, and the land given to him after he retired as pastor, was where the Methodist Church stands.

The sketch from which I received most of my information states that the town house was used first as the parsonage for the town church, near where the present Presbyterian Manse stands. I was told by a relative of Mr. Mattison Melick, a former owner of the stone house next to the Manse, that, at one time, workmen digging on that property found an underground passage and iron rings set in stone; therefore it seems possible that the town house and prison stood on or near this lot.

Jonathan Dunham's house stood on the knoll near the green where the Episcopal Rectory now stands. It was originally built of brick, said to have been brought from Holland by vessel and used as ballast on the voyage. The same brick was used in the present building. The creek, then called Papiack creek, ran back of the house, and in early days large ships came up as far as this property. So many of Dunham's relatives settled north of the kirk green that the neighborhood was known for many years as Dunhamtown.

In 1670 Jonathan Dunham built the first grist mill in this part of the country. It was located on the south side of the bridge below the Presbyterian Church on the road to Carteret; some of the posts are still there in the meadow by the creek. The mill stone from this mill can be seen today at the back door of the Episcopal Rectory. The old grist mill stood for many years, grinding for the comfort of several generations.

Where the Barron Library now stands was the home of Samuel Smith; nearby was Edward Haines's blacksmith shop, now the Baldwin house. A little further on was the residence of John Dennis, later the Ricord Girls' School; years afterward, the school became the home of Edmund Ayres, grandfather of W. T. Ames.

Samuel Moore kept the first tavern in Woodbridge. "In 1686, Samuel Moore was by unanimous vote, made choice of, to keep an ordinary, that is, an inn, for the town." Samuel Moore was a very remarkable man, one of the town's most distinguished citizens, and no one was better known or more implicitly trusted; for nearly twenty years he was the town clerk, and was chosen deputy five times. Between the buildings now occupied by Greiner's barber shop and Janni's store

on the corner of Green Street and Rahway Avenue, stood this historical tavern. In the year 1730, the first cup of tea enjoyed in the State was drunk by a company of ladies in this same building which was owned at that time by one of my ancestors, Mrs. Campyon; the tea was brought from New York, and was regarded as a choice article. A discussion arose among the ladies, so the story goes, as to the vessel in which it should be prepared; a vessel was selected, and then the question arose, should it be boiled, brewed or steeped? The steeping party won, and so the tea was steeped. It was served in small cups with little cakes. During the Revolutionary War this house was also used as barracks.

The building was owned for many years by Dr. Ellis B. Freeman, father of Miss Susie Freeman. He was the beloved town doctor. The first drug store was located here, Dr. Freeman being the proprietor; Mr. M. A. Brown, father of the late Mrs. H. A. Tappen, and Charles Drake served their apprenticeship under Dr. Freeman; afterwards they established drug stores of their own on Main Street. For many years it was a general store, with Jeremiah TenEyck as proprietor; his daughter was the first telegrapher in this section. During the Civil war the post office was located here, with Mr. Samuel Freeman, father of Miss Mabel Freeman, postmaster.

About 70 years ago a fashionable millinery shop was operated in the little store in the end of the building near the corner, where all the elite of town had their bonnets made; later the butcher shops of Turner Bros. and Mr. A. L. Huber were located here. Very large shingles originally covered the sides of the building which was taken down recently.

On the opposite corner, where the American Oil Station stands, stood the old Pike house, known later as the Woodbridge Hotel, with its high porch at one end, and the bar room on the ground floor at the other. Many a tale could be told of that old hotel now gone. We can see the stage coaches drive up to its doors in the early days, deposit the mail and passengers, water the horses at the old watering trough, and start out again on their way to Philadelphia or nearby towns. This was at one time the place of voting and of holding town court.

On the South side of Green Street, in the early days, were the homes of Judge Hale, John Smith, the Scotchman, and Thomas Bloomfield, Jr., all prominent men. William Compton also lived there. He was the father of the first white child born in Woodbridge, 1667. After the child grew to womanhood and was married, the town voted "To give a lot to Caleb Campbell in consideration his wife was the first Christian child to be born in this town." Her name was Mary, and her tombstone can be found in the Presbyterian Cemetery.

Across the railroad, the house where Mr. James Dunne lives, is the site of the home of Nathaniel FitzRandolph, where the first Quaker meeting was held.

Between the Craftsmen's Club, which was formerly the home of the Brewsters, and the residence of Mr. John Ryan, was a large tract of land, running back almost to Grove Avenue; large stone pillars supporting huge gates stood at either end of the property. The road led through a beautiful lawn and stately pines to a lovely

brick and stone house; this was known as the Roderique place, which was later sold to Mr. Jensen, the architect, who laid out the estate into building lots, and opened up Tisdale place through the property. The old house and spacious barns stood where Tisdale place is, half way between Green Street and Grove Avenue.

Opposite this property was the Gilbert Heard house, the home of Mr. John Love for many years; this old house has been the scene of many different activities. Once a school was conducted there by Miss Sue Arrowsmith of Blazing Star Landing, and it was also the residence of the Rector of Trinity Church in early days. It was purchased some years afterwards by the Congregational Church as their parsonage. Beside this house, between it and Mrs. Gilham's stood a quaint little story and a half house, built with the back door to the street, front facing South; it was the home of two sisters, Mrs. Blakeney and Mrs. Van Wagonen, who were formerly Freemans. The front yard was covered with periwinkle and a very tall old tree grew by the house, looking very much like a huge umbrella protecting this little home. The grandparents of the Levis lived there for many years.

Dr. Rothfuss's home was the site of a large old colonial house, its early owner I could not learn. Mr. White, brother-in-law of Mrs. David Demarest, lived there, and she made it her home after her husband's death. Mr. Charles Demarest, father of Sherman Demarest, lived there also; Mr. Irving Demarest purchased the property, moved a large part of the house to Barron Avenue, which is now the home of the Dettmers, and built the present handsome residence. In former years the house was surrounded by many stately pine trees and a terraced lawn.

On the corner where Frank Valentine lived, the present home of Dr. Belafsky, was the Elder Kent's house. This stood there during the Revolution; after the close of the War of 1812, a celebration was held on the lot. A large tree stood in the center under which was held a barbecue; a whole ox was roasted, and drinks were served; people came from everywhere, even Staten Island; it is said to have been the biggest affair in the history of that time. Forman Brown, David Brown's ancestor, was master of ceremonies, and Gage Inslee had a prominent part in the celebration.

On the northwest corner of Green Street, commonly called Rowland's Corner, stood the old Rowland house. This was at one time an inn. The tap room was on the corner nearest town. It was a pleasant old fashioned house; the large part had two stories; the smaller, a story and a half, with its little windows peeping out from under the eaves. A lovely boxwood tree stood near the front door. The stage coaches used to drive up and turn around at the corner of the inn. This is perhaps the reason for the road being so wide at this point. It was known at one time as the tavern of Philip Brown, the proprietor. The story is told that William Dunlap, artist and painter of one of Washington's famous portraits, who lived in Perth Amboy, walked to Woodbridge to take the stage at the corner. When he reached the tavern, the stage had gone; it was by this time quite late; no one seemed to be awake in the tavern. Dunlap entered the building, and, finding no one around, took a candle, and went upstairs, then, finding a vacant room, he went to bed.

On the road leading to Iselin there were several large barns; opposite our house stood one; nearby where Mr. Schrimpe's house stands, was an old well, very near the sidewalk; many a person stopped and refreshed himself with a drink from the little old tin cup which always hung by the side of the well.

A little farther on stood a small building, which in the early days was a general store. It was used as a voting place for many years up to the time the High School was used as our district voting place. In 1812 the post office was located in this building. After Mr. Decker bought the property the buildings were torn down.

Turning down Amboy Avenue behind the Rowland house, there was located, in the early days, the town pound with its squealing pigs and hissing geese, quite a source of revenue to the town.

Across the brook, on the corner where the Knights of Columbus house stands, was the Cross Keys Tavern. The original building was moved to a lot back of the present building, when Mr. Elias bought the property and built his home, which is now the club house. The old well still occupies the same spot on the front lawn, but it is now adorned by a very ornate enclosure. The tap room was on the end of the Inn near the well.

April 22, 1789 was an eventful day for Cross Keys Tavern and for the town. George Washington, on his way back from his home to New York to be inaugurated the first President of the United States, arrived in Woodbridge in the afternoon, in company with Gov. William Livingston, and was escorted to the tavern by the Woodbridge Cavalry, Captain Ichabod Potter, commanding. Washington remained overnight, the guests of the proprietor, John Manning. Then, the next morning, he was escorted by the militia and by citizens to Elizabethtown.

The first liberty pole, or flag staff, erected in Woodbridge, was placed in front of the tavern across the street, shortly after the Revolution by Janet Gage, for whom our D.A.R chapter is named. She is said to have been a woman of enthusiastic temperament, and rather masculine in character, but of undoubted patriotism. Her husband, Philip Gage, was a Tory. She lived near the clay banks of Hampton Cutter. The corner where Janet Gage erected the pole was later known as Commoss and Ensign's Corner. Here stood the home of General Nathaniel Heard, who had the distinction of arresting Governor Franklin, the last Englishman to hold the Governorship. Heard owned two houses, described as "four rooms on a floor and two and a half stories high, well furnished and fifty feet in length."

John Manning was the first postmaster of the town. The postoffice was established on July 31st, 1792.

Next to General Heard's property on Amboy Road was the land of James Parker, the printer. He was apprenticed to William Bradford, the first printer in New York; he established in Woodbridge, in 1751, a press which printed the first magazine in the Colonies; he printed the second volume of "Nevill's Laws of New

Jersey" as well as paper money bearing the Tobacco Leaf and Acorn on the back.

In 1765 James Parker moved his press from Woodbridge to Burlington for the accommodation of Samuel Smith (author of "Smith's History of New Jersey.") After this book was printed he returned his press to Woodbridge. The printing house was burned down by a band of Tories during the Revolution. It stood near the Catholic Priest's house on Amboy Avenue.

The old Henry Demarest home was on the present site of St. James' Church. This was a roomy house with a large back porch under the upper floor. It was the home of Mr. Irving Demarest's grandfather. On the other side of the street were the homes of Obadiah Ayers, John Adams and Richard Worth, whose house stood on the corner of Albert Street and Amboy Avenue.

Strawberry Hill was the location of the Sheep Commons on the land north of St. Joseph's Orphanage. On the hill where the large red brick house stands, built by the grandfather of Hampton Cutter, was the land of John Pike; he owned 240 acres south of the Cutter farms. The house recently occupied by Robbin's Inn was the house built by William Cutter and given to the son first to be married. It was his son, Hampton Cutter who afterwards built the brick house opposite.

On the farm south of Hampton Cutter's property now occupied by a dairy, is the house built by William Cutter for his son William. Kelsry Cutter, the great, great grandfather of Mrs. Moffet and Mrs. Grace Brown bought the land from Spa Spring to Bunn's Lane from John Pike.

Opposite Wetterberg's factory and the Genasco Plant a road branched off to the west from the Old Amboy Road. A few yards down the road near a bridge, was a spring called Spa Spring. Where this spring was located, a brook ran through a lovely grove of trees to the right of the lane. Among these trees on a hill stood an old white house, the home of Ephriam Cutter. Ephriam was a brother of Hampton and William whom I have just mentioned. Some years ago the house was burned down and all the lovely antiques were lost.

On the road leading from Amboy Avenue to Cutter's Dock stood a large old house on the hill, facing south. It had three dormer windows and a long porch extending across the front of the house; a very substantial old home in its day. This was the home of David Demarest, the head of the family of Woodbridge Demarests. For years it was in the possession of the family and was sold to the Valentines. The stones of the foundation can be seen today on the side of the hill.

Where Drake's Drug Store was, on Main Street, stood the house of Philip Gage. Across the railroad tracks was Hiram Frazee's home and opposite on the site of the building now occupied by Bitting Coal Co., lived Campbell, the school teacher. Later this was the home of Alexander Brown, the grandfather of Mrs. Harry Reyder. The small part of the house was very old. The large part was moved back on a side street and remodeled, and is still standing.

Where Christensen Brothers Store now stands, not so many years ago there was a little one-and-a-half story house owned by Jacob Freeman, whose father served in the war of 1812. It had queer little windows and a very high porch. This

house was willed by Jacob Freeman to the Presbyterian Church. It was sold and was taken down to make room for the present stores erected by Mr. Christensen.

Just east of this little house stood the home of Cortland Osborn, grandfather of Miss Rae Osborn. It was a very imposing looking house, and was moved back on New Street and remodeled when the block of stores and office buildings were erected not many years ago. Mr. Osborn and his father had a marble yard. Many of the stones in the cemeteries in town bear the initials of the elder Osborn.

A very curious looking building stood next to the Telephone Building on William Street. Several years ago it was destroyed by an explosion, and at that time it was supposed to be the oldest building in Woodbridge. Very little seems to be known of its history.

At the end of Rahway Avenue past the Legion Stadium where Berry's Factory stood and where the town dock is located, stood Patten and Potter's Mill. On this lane stands today the old house of Joel Freeman, who was for many years the sexton of the Presbyterian Church. The house has not been changed very much.

Where the Post Office is now located on Main Street stood a dark looking house standing far back from the street in a hollow. There never was any porch at the front. The only way to reach the front door was by means of a plank. The story is told that Mr. Inslee, the owner, did not like porches and would never have one built on his house. At last it became the home of negroes and until it was taken down to make room for the present building, it still was minus a front porch.

On the corner of Pearl and Main Streets many of us will remember the large old building where Anness and Brewster had their Feed and Grain Store. This building originally stood on Main Street near where now stands the home of Mr. and Mrs. Bergen. It was the old school house called the Jefferson School or Upper School and was used until the red brick building on School Street known as No. 1 was built in 1876. Mr. Campbell was principal and continued in that capacity after the new school was opened.

Some years later it was moved to the corner where the Water Company Offices are now located and again moved to a lot opposite the Municipal Building, when the Bank Building, now owned by the Water Company was built. It was remodeled and stuccoed and now is a store and gas station.

The old Strawberry Hill School stood on the corner of Amboy Avenue and Bunn's Lane. It was built in 1701 and remained standing until a few years ago when it was torn down. Dally says, "Before the structure was completed it is likely the village school held its sessions in the Meeting House on the Kirk Green and that as little children, our forefathers sported on the Meeting House Green." Samuel Ensign, father of Mr. E. C. Ensign, for many years taught school in this Old Strawberry Hill Schoolhouse.

An old picture printed in a town paper some years ago shows a portion of Rahway Avenue near the old White Church. On the left is seen a two story building with a cupola. From the sketch I judge the building stood between the Ensign and Randolph property. It was called the Academy. I have been told by an old resident

that the Old Academy was moved to Main Street opposite our Woodbridge Theatre. It was made into a tenement and for some years the top floor was used as a meeting place of various organizations. The Temperance Society used it as their headquarters. The building was taken down some years ago.

Another school, a one room school, was built after the Academy was moved and stood on the same site. This school was moved opposite the old Woodbridge Hotel by the side of the brook next to Mr. Filer's present residence and was used as a Printing Shop by Peter Edgar. "The Independent Hour," the town paper at that time was printed there. It was later used by Owen Dunigan as a plumbing shop and when the present row of stores was built, it was taken down.

Dr. Ellis B. Freeman's apple orchard was next to the little school when it stood near the Randolph property. In the front yard stood the old well with its bucket and rope. I was told by a member of the family that the school children came up to the well to get a bucket of water and incidentally pay a visit to the Freeman apple orchard.

Between the Presbyterian Manse and Mrs. E. C. Ensign's house stood the Old Lecture Room. This was used until the present Sunday School was added to the church in 1875. It was then sold and moved further down the street. Later it was destroyed by fire.

In Old Dutch Row on Rahway Avenue, near lower Grove Avenue was a long, plain two-story house; at one time it was used as a Girls' School, called the Atheneum.

When Lafayette visited this country in 1824, he passed through Woodbridge on his way to Philadelphia. Sixteen little girls from this school dressed in white, each wearing on her breast a letter made of marigolds and forming the words "Welcome Lafayette," greeted him.

Near the opposite corner stands a house which has always held a prominent place in the history of Woodbridge. During the Revolutionary War, it was known as the Elm Tree Tavern. Charles Jackson was the Proprietor. When the stage came through town, it was the stop where horses were changed for a fresh team before going on. Many if not all, of the public meetings of the town were held during this period (1767) at the village tavern. After Jackson's death his widow performed the duties of landlady and entertained the annual town meeting for several years.

The tavern received the name from the fact that a very large elm tree stood in front of it. The tree, 32 feet in circumference, was cut down in 1837; it was said that fifteen men could stand upright together in its hollow trunk.

Professor Stryker founded a school in this building calling it the Elm Tree Institute. It was this Mr. Stryker who delivered the address of welcome to Lafayette when he paid his visit in 1824. Part of the building is still intact. Later it was sold to Thomas H. Morris who conducted a school there for many years.

The old stone house next door formerly owned by Mrs. Tisdale was the first Manse of the Presbyterian Church. Rev. Azel Roe lived there during the Revolution. In 1853, the church sold it and since then it has changed hands many times.

Here a girls school was conducted by Miss Ann Stansbury, later Mrs. Edward Thompson.

The Stansbury farm and homestead was located west of the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks near Edgar's Hill; the house stood where the Gusmer factory now stands. The father of the family was a Minute Man. When called, he was ploughing in the field; he left his plough and went to war. The family never had any trace of him from that day.

Mrs. E. H. Boynton's house, on Rahway Avenue, now the property of Dr. C. H. Rothfuss, was the home of Joseph Barron. It was built about 1803 and remained the home of a member of the Barron family until purchased by Mr. Boynton. Much of the lovely interior has been preserved. The old fireplace, lovely old mantels and the enclosed stair cases have been kept as they originally were. This was one of Woodbridge's handsome colonial homes.

The Baldwin Home dates back many years. It was the home of Henry Freeman, father of Mrs. Dixon and Mrs. Kellogg. He was a fifer in the Continental Army. Very little of the original house has been changed.

On Freeman Street across from the Presbyterian Church, is the former home of the Bloodgoods, ancestors of J. Edward Harned. Mr. Bloodgood had a tannery, which stood by the brook which crosses Ridgedale Avenue and winds around through the meadows back of the house. Some of the stones of the tannery were used when the bridge was built. There used to be a little old house where the Bowers' Machine Shop stands. It was on the property where the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks are. This was the property of Dr. E. B. Freeman, who was instrumental in getting the railroad to come through Woodbridge.

Dr. Moses Bloomfield, surgeon in Washington's Continental Army, one time representative in the Provincial Congress and General Assembly, owned on Freeman Street what was known as the Hance property, later on bought by Mr. Hinsdale, (Mrs. E. H. Boynton's father). The house stood back of Stanley Potter's present home. It was a lovely long rambling house with spacious grounds, having a fountain in the middle of the lawn.

Gov. Joseph Bloomfield, son of Dr. Moses Bloomfield, lived there. Later the house was moved to Harrell Avenue, remodeled into a two family house, and now owned by Mr. L. C. Holden.

Many prominent citizens made their home in the vicinity of Freeman Street in those early days—Thomas Pike, John Bishop, and John Conger, ancestor of Mrs. George Merrill.

The old Lewis Van Sickle place now remodeled and occupied by Mr. William Thompson, was quite a large house in the early days before it was changed.

What is known as St. George Avenue running from Woodbridge to Rahway and to points north was the old King George Road or King's Highway. It was one of the old post roads; in fact it was an old Indian Trail called the Minnisink Trail, starting in Orange Co., N. Y., near Goshen, coming down through Paterson, Newark and on to Fords. The road turned right at the Knights of Columbus Club

House, and ran along Main Street to the Anness and Potter Factory, turning to the left at the corner going up over the hill past the Catholic Cemetery into Fords, continuing across the Raritan River. The hill near the Cemetery was called Spunk Hill! so called probably because it required some spunk to climb it. Across the street from the Cemetery, south of the Melick home, was a very old house, the home of Robert Coddington, ancestor of Mrs. B. Walling; he was a fifer in the war. The old barns remained standing until recently.

Fords was known in the early days by the name of Sling Tail, perhaps taken from the brook by that name. Here we find the homes of the early settlers; the Fords, Potters, Crows, Harneds and Voorheeses. Back of the Fords Bank Building, near the main road, was located the Inn of Samuel Ford, the son of Ebenezer Ford for whom Fords was named. He lived on the corner, hence "Fords Corner," the former name of the town. Ebenezer Ford was a member of the Commission which appraised the losses of the citizens of Woodbridge during the Revolution.

Next to Ford's Inn, where Wesley Liddle lived, was Benjamin Crow's house. His wife was Grace Ford, loved by everyone and known as "Aunt Grace." She was the great-grandmother of Rev. Ernest Brown, a former pastor of the Carteret Church.

Crow's Mill Road led off the main road going down to the river. In this locality many prominent citizens lived. The Jonathan Harned house, about in ruins, is still an old landmark, a monument to the most prominent Quaker of that day.

The house of Aaron Drake, grandfather of Miss Martha Drake, was still there a few years ago. His wife was Nancy Harned; her father, Rev. Jonathan Harned, circuit rider for the Methodist Church.

Crow's Mill was in this part of Fords, as well as Florida Grove. This latter was a rather famous picnic ground in earlier days, a place for Sunday School picnics, but in later days rather a rough place. Nothing is left but the name.

At the junction of the road going from Fords to Metuchen and the road which is the continuation of our Main Street, stood an Inn called "Underhill's Inn." No doubt this was very well patronized, for it stood on a corner where roads led to Metuchen, Piscataway, Perth Amboy and Woodbridge.

According to tradition, Timothy Bloomfield's house, at the corner of the intersection of Amboy and Woodbridge Turnpikes near Ford's Corner, was the rendezvous for the "Jersey Blues" in Woodbridge. Here the patriots met to discuss the progress of the War and to propose means for harassing the enemy. These meetings were, of course secret. Eunice Bloomfield, for whom our C. A. R. was named, was Timothy's daughter. Timothy Bloomfield, was a prisoner during part of the War; he spent part of the time in the Jail in New York and part of the time in the notorious Jersey Prison Ship.

On the road known now as St. George Avenue, just before one comes to Avenel Street, there is an old landmark which stood near the spot where the British had an encounter with some of our soldiers. There was quite a skirmish, and a story has been told of the little daughter of the house going out to the barn and hiding

the cattle until the British had gone. Jonathan Bloomfield lived here. It was the type of house built in the early days; the end to the road, the front to the south. It was shingled; recently an addition has been added to the end by the highway fully obscuring the old part. If one did not know its history, one would most likely take it for a modern dwelling.

Another very old house used to stand near the Bloomfield home, but it has disappeared. This was the Thorp home. Many little old houses used to stand on both sides of this part of St. George Avenue. As you drive to Rahway, over to the left you see the Club House of the Colonia Golf Club. Very little of the original house can be seen as additions have been built on nearly every side. It used to stand on the hill overlooking the surrounding country, a lovely old farmhouse, owned by the father of Mr. T. H. Morris, known as Uncle Harvey. Before his father bought the farm, it belonged to Samuel Force. He must have lived there in 1776, as Dally's history relates he was elected a Freeholder in that year.

If you take the road to the left after going under the railroad on Six Roads and go on that road a short distance, you come to rather a dilapidated old house on the right. It was the home of Samuel Moore, a Tory. Do not confuse him with the Samuel Moore that kept the Tavern and who was a public spirited citizen. The wife and children of Samuel, the Tory, were sent to Staten Island by order of the New Jersey Council of Safety during the Revolution. Samuel refused to fight in the war.

As the road winds onto the Golf Links back from the road on the left, stands what was in former years, John Compton's home. The lovely old trees still hide the place from the gaze of passers-by. It has been very much modernized. Colonia has many old places of interest scattered throughout the countryside.

The MacKenzie place is still a lovely old white house set on a hill on a road leading toward Locust Grove. Here you will see houses which once were homes of prosperous farmers, now deserted by the families, and occupied by foreigners.

On the road to Rahway, called the Reformatory Road, many early settlers built their homes,—the Rufus Edgar home formerly the Meeker place, now called White Star Farm; and the lovely old home of J. Blanchard Edgar, now Steven's Inn, built by Major Billy Edgar, as he was called, grandfather of Blanchard. Major William Edgar lived in the old white house which stood on the Reformatory corner as you turned to go into Rahway. It was one of the old landmarks and spoken of as "Edgar's Corner." It was built by Thomas Edgar. It was in good repair when bought by the State for the Reformatory and torn down. It stood as a sentinel on the old crossroads corner.

Next to this house, still stands part of the old Denike Homestead. This house used to stand near the junction of the main line and Perth Amboy branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad. It was moved when the railroad was elevated, to the present location. I think it is still owned by a member of that family.

Across the street stood the Cooper Homestead, grandparents of Mrs. W. B. Krug. It was an old Colonial house with an old Dutch door and fan-shaped

windows over the top of the door. This, I am told, was formerly the home of the Crowell family. The Daniel Britton Moore home was down in the meadows along the Creek further on toward Rahway. Avenel had a few old homes in the part where Mrs. Krug lives. Mr. Benjamin Clark's house across from Mrs. Krug's is a very old house and further on toward Rahway on that road was the Murray Perkins place, the home of Thomas Bloomfield, known as "Continental Tommy."

Some still remember the little old district school known as the "Six Roads Schoolhouse." It stood on the corner near the Tourist Camp on St. George Avenue, just before you come to the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks. For many years the children from Avenel and that part of the Township attended that little old school. It was used until the Avenel school was built not many years ago.

Part of Rahway was included in Woodbridge during the early days. It was not called Rahway until 1822.

Along the Rahway River south of the road leading from Edgar's Corner was a settlement called Leetown now Leesville Avenue. There are still several very small houses on the river bank. On the other side of the street as the road winds on through the town, is an old house standing on an elevation of ground. It is a long narrow house with dormer windows. I imagine the porch has been changed and the sides have been covered with colored asbestos shingles. This was the home of the Alston family.

Carteret, known as East Rahway or Rahway Neck, was a very important part of the township in early Colonial days. The only means of land transportation was the Stage Coach. The Sound, Raritan Bay, and River, and the Creek and Rahway River made communication with the other settlements nearby much easier; boats at that time could come up the streams which are now merely brooks.

A ferry was located at Carteret on the property where the U. S. Metals Plant is now located. There was a similar ferry on Staten Island at Rossville. This ferry at Carteret, was owned by Joseph Fitz Randolph, son of Nathaniel Fitz Randolph. The Indians called the place Smoking Point, and it was named Blazing Star Ferry. The name Blazing Star Landing was still used until recent years, when industry bought the land all along the waterfront, and factories were built.

Boats bringing passengers to the Landing from New York and other points, were met by Stage Coach and transported through the Township. Near the ferry was a picnic ground known as Sawyer's Grove. Excursions came by boat from the cities nearby.

From this landing a private road ran along the shore for a short distance. On this road stood two beautiful Colonial Houses, the homes of John Osborn and the Arrowsmiths. The former moved away some years before the property was sold.

The old Blazing Star School, a little district school, stood on Woodbridge Avenue, where now stands the large brick school house. In this school the people of the village used to meet for worship, Dr. McNulty going down to preach. From that little group the Presbyterian Church was formed, and in 1898 the Carteret church was built and dedicated.

In 1894, they remodeled the school, raising it and adding some more rooms. I taught in that school for four years.

Farther on towards the sound across the creek was what was called "The Hill" another section of Carteret before it was thickly settled. On the road through this part of town lived the Crowell family. The house has never been changed and still stands there, a quaint low house surrounded by a large lawn and garden. This was the Beverly Crowell home.

The part around what is now Port Reading has been the location of many homes of some of the oldest settlers and families of Woodbridge.

There were the Browns—David's old home burned just recently; the William Brown place on Blair Road also burned. Phillip Brown's place, now the home of Clifford Blair, is a fine home in perfect condition.

Around the part of Port Reading near the Coal Docks and their office buildings lived the Turners, Daniel and William. Where Hagamen Heights school stands on the road to Carteret back from the road stood the old Vernon house, and nearby, the home of Mr. Theodore Leber's father.

South of the Port Reading offices near the creek and sound, was the old Haddon place. It was built about 1744 and was standing until a few years ago when it was burned. John Haddon's home still stands on the triangle between the two railroads. Built in 1808, the timber was cut off Mr. Haddon's property; that was used in building this house.

The Pierces, Fitz Randolphs, Tappens, Bunns and Crowells lived in this locality. All have gone.

The old Prall House on the south side of Woodbridge Avenue not far from the Salt Meadows was originally the home of John Creamer who taught school during the War and served in the Revolution. On the Old Road to Sewaren, near the Carteret Road, stood the old Brewster place. This house was burned just recently. The home of Mrs. Cooper in Sewaren was the old Marsh-Smith house. It stood in Port Reading where the school now stands and was moved to its present location by Mr. Johnson when Sewaren was laid out. For many years it was a boarding house. It was a long plain looking building. Mrs. Cooper bought it and remodeled it into apartments. It is said to have been Governor Carteret's home to which the soldiers came from Tottenville to confer with the Governor.

The Harrison home stood on Smith's Creek near Port Reading. There was an old family burying ground on this place.

Going toward Iselin, formerly called Uniontown, Samuel Dennis owned the land on the south side of the road. He was held in high esteem by the townspeople and held many public offices of trust. He was one of the "lot layers" when the property was first divided among the settlers. Ichabod Potter's place stood where the William Edgar house stands. Beyond the tracks of the Port Reading Railroad on the south side of the road down a long lane, we see what was once a lovely old home overlooking the town. It is known as the Campbell farm. It was the home

of Alex. Edgar, my great-great-grandfather. For generations this remained in the Edgar family.

The legend has come down in our family history that my great-grandmother was alone in this house with her little family when at dusk, a boy, very much frightened came to the door. He had a message for the soldiers stationed along the creek near Sewaren. He was tired and too frightened to go on. Realizing the importance of the message, and knowing there was no one to take it on, as her husband was in the militia, she put on her hat and shawl and went down through the woods along the brook, and took the message to the Camp.

This side of the Ceramics Company stands Captain Peter Edgar's home. It is as it was originally, except that the clap boards have been covered with asbestos shingles.

Across the Super Highway a little further to the west, stood a spacious old farm house with large barns and farm buildings. Lovely old trees stood around it and by the brook running through the yard were beautiful old willow trees, one or two still alive today. This was originally the Jonathan Freeman place, grandfather of Miss Susie Freeman. He was the builder of the Old White Church. He was a Post Rider during the Revolution. It afterwards was sold by the Freeman Estate and Mr. Charles Bloomfield the grandson lived there for some years. At last Bamberger and Company bought the farm and soon afterwards the house was destroyed by fire.

About 1667 the authorities ordered that Woodbridge should be laid out, surveyed and plots assigned to the settlers and roads marked out. Before this, the chief method of locomotion was the primitive one of walking. Many of our roads follow the trails made by the Indians; this fact accounts for the many crooked country roads. The first road ran down by the Kirk Green over the Papiack Creek, not on the south side of the church as it is today, but coming back of the Green and meeting the present road, which runs from Woodbridge to Rahway. From the creek it went down through what was called the "uplands" to Blazing Star Landing. Much of the old road has been changed. One road which has disappeared entirely, ran from Pierce's Landing, which was formerly Boynton Beach, and along the sound joining the road which now goes to Port Reading. Boynton Beach, a famous picnic ground, was the playground of the country. This was owned by Mr. C. W. Boynton, father of the Boynton Brothers.

Many old places have disappeared from our village and township. Among them the Old Salamander Brick Works, where the Woodbridge Lumber Company stands; the Old Mill on the road to Sewaren beside the bridge. Some years ago the piles were still standing in the Creek. This was known as Phillip's Grist Mill. Several other mills were located along the Creek. No trace of them is left.

Travel to New York before the Pennsylvania Railroad came through town, was by boat, Sewaren Dock was the steamboat landing. The boat ran from New York to New Brunswick, made a trip in the morning to New York and returned

late in the afternoon. It was a very nice sail before the waterfront was built up and fertilizer factories and oil plants made it unsightly.

With the passing of the landmarks, the social customs and habits of a community change. Gone is the simplicity of former times. We have no more the unconventional gatherings such as apple bees, husking frolics and quilting parties. We do not wish the old times back, but if the genial spirit of that time could be restored, we might be the better for it. If our forefathers should come back today, they would find very little to remind them of the Old Woodbridge of nearly three hundred years ago.

